

## ***“Prepare for the Unexpected by Taking Action Now”***

A powerful hurricane is approaching. “What should *I* do?” An “F4” tornado is bearing down on your town. “What should *I* do?” The national threat level is raised. “What should *I* do?” That one question – “What should *I* do?” – is asked by thousands of **Virginia** residents every time we are reminded that our lives can instantly be changed by a number of different types of emergencies.

For some reason, too many Americans have answered the question, “What should *I* do?” by doing little or nothing at all. In fact, there are simple steps each of us can take to prepare for whatever might come our way. Emergencies will happen, but taking action now can help us minimize the impact they will have on our lives.

That’s what this September, National Preparedness Month, is all about: helping us take action! It’s about gathering our families and figuring out what we will do if an emergency happens in our community. How will we find our family members? How will we know where to go? What supplies will we need and where should we keep them?

The resources to guide us toward better preparedness and help us answer the “What should *I* do?” questions are just a click away. Visit [www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov) and [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org) to start. They contain a wealth of information about what you can do to prepare.

**National Preparedness Month 2005** is a nationwide effort to encourage Americans to take simple steps to prepare for emergencies in their homes, businesses and schools. Throughout September, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and the American Red Cross will work with a wide variety of organizations to highlight the importance of emergency preparedness and promote individual involvement through events and activities across the nation, such as first aid trainings, town hall meetings and much more.

September is an ideal time for families to update their emergency supply kits, family emergency plans and to become better informed about different threats and local emergency plans. Many things can change over the course of a year, and it is imperative that the entire family have the most up-to-date emergency contact information and Family Communications Plan as they head back to school and work.

National Preparedness Month is also the ideal time to get involved in preparing your community. Citizen Corps provides residents with opportunities to prepare, train and support local first responders. And the American Red Cross provides volunteer opportunities in **Virginia**. Visit <http://www.citizencorps.gov> or your local **Red Cross Chapter** for more information about how to get involved.

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